FAN ZONE FOR THE 2026 FIFA WORLD CUP IN NEWARK NEW JERSEY

A VERY SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVE LAUNCHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALBANIAN - AMERICAN ENTREPRENEUR KRESHNIK BERISHA

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NRBP Brings Community Together to Reflect on Newark Fan Village Success

NRBP BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER TO REFLECT ON NEWARK FAN VILLAGE SUCCESS

On Aug 19, 2026

Local leaders, small business owners, and community partners gathered this week at First Presbyterian Church for “Newark and the World Cup: A Community Debrief,” convened by the Newark Regional Business Partnership (NRBP). The discussion celebrated Newark’s accomplishments during the 39-day World Cup Newark Fan Village while also taking an honest look at the lessons learned, challenges faced, and opportunities ahead as the city prepares to host future international events.

According to event organizers Kreshnik Berisha and Gabe Ribeiro, more than 144,000 visitors experienced free games, music, and cultural programming at the Fan Village, which operated for 39 consecutive days without a single public safety incident. What began as a grassroots idea developed through weekly community meetings in January 2026 grew into one of New Jersey’s most successful World Cup gathering places.

The debrief brought together Councilmen Michael Silva and C. Lawrence Crump, representatives of Councilwomen Amina Bey and Louise Scott-Rountree, and the organizers and partners who helped bring the Fan Village to life. Participants

reflected on the collaboration, determination, and community spirit that made the effort possible.

“It was where the world came together,” Silva said, calling it one of the proudest moments of his career.

The discussion also highlighted the Fan Village’s broader economic and civic impact. Berisha and Ribeiro shared the realities of building and sustaining a major activation with limited resources, while Oya Tukel, Dean of the Martin Tuchman School of Management at New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), revealed findings from a social media geofencing project commissioned by NJIT. The project analyzed activity from more

than 4,000 accounts across 60 countries and found that approximately 75% of the social media sentiment captured during match times was positive.

Key partnerships made the scale possible, including a sponsorship from Anheuser-Busch and a FIFA viewing license that allowed organizers to show the matches to the crowds. Organizers credited a wide network of collaborators, including Plusable, Sihana Hospitality Group, CasaNova, John Schreiber and NJPAC, public safety partners, and the late Al Coutinho, whose contributions were remembered warmly.

Looking ahead to the FIFA Women's World Cup, UEFA European

Championship, Africa Cup of Nations, Copa América, and other major events, participants identified several priorities: start planning early, strengthen citywide collaboration, measure impact across all five wards, engage county partners, and market Newark as a destination capable of welcoming the world.

For Berisha, the opportunity is clear: “Why not Newark?” He urged the city and its partners to approach these opportunities with confidence as New Jersey’s premier host destination.

“The Newark Fan Village showed what is possible when a community comes together around a shared vision,” said Ferlanda Fox Nixon, President and CEO of

NRBP. “Its success gives us an opportunity to think bigger about Newark’s future. We can build on this momentum, welcome the world with confidence, and ensure that the benefits of major international events reach businesses, residents, and neighborhoods across all five wards. The Fan Village was more than a successful World Cup celebration—it was a blueprint for what Newark can accomplish together.”

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